



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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NEW YORK, NY 10021

December 28, 1983

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JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Dr. A. M. Kuliev
Hereditary Diseases Program
World Health Organization
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

Dear Dr. Kuliev:

I thank you for your communications with respect to the WHO Hereditary Diseases Program. I would certainly be happy to be able to contribute in a more substantial way if the opportunity arises during my renewed membership on your task group.

Meanwhile another issue has arisen where I feel you should receive authentic information. The Vice President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, Academician Aleksandrov, has apparently received and accepted some misconceptions about the opinions and attitudes of geneticists with respect to the "fatalistic pre-determination" of performance of economic, social, and racial groups. His picture, needless to say, is totally at variance with the consensual thinking of genetic scientists; but I fear that misunderstandings of this kind can only inhibit the further progress and use of genetics. It would also be a needless irritant in other inter-personal and international relationships.

My concern, besides his own personal attitudes, is that Academician Aleksandrov's words on this subject may have great weight among other scientists in the Soviet Union, especially those who do not read the primary literature. I am not, however, eager to fan the embers.

In any event, I wanted to assure you of my own position on a matter that touches closely on the work of your program.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg